(a) what steps have been taken, so far, for bringing down the prices of essential commodities like foodgrains, pluses, edible oils, soaps and detergents, sugar, gur and Khandsari and spices since June, 1991 month-wise;

(b) to what extent the prevailing retail and wholesale prices of each of these items have increased/decreased during the period, giving comparative prevailing prices during June and November, 1991 and corresponding figures for 1990 month-wise; and

(c) what are the details regarding domestic consumption of edible oil during 1991-92?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED): (a) Government takes appropriate steps on regular basis to keep the prices of essential commodities under check. A statement showing the steps taken in this direction for specific commodities is given in the statement (*See* below).

(b) A comparative statement showing the month-end wholesale and retail prices of selected essential commodities at selected centres from June, 1991 to November, 1991 (latest available) with the corresponding figures in 1990 alongwith variations in prices during the period is given in the Annexure (*See* Appendix CLXI, Annexure No. 14).

(c) The 1991-92 oil year has just commenced from November, 1991. The estimated net edible oil available for consumption during the year is likely to be around 56 lakh metric tonnes.

Statement

Steps taken to bring down the prices of essential commodities

Foodgrains

Rice: The allocation of rice from the central pool for PDS has been stepped up from the average of 8.65 lakh tonnes during the period January-June 1991 to about 10.2 lakh tonnes for the period July-November 1991. It has been decided to sell a quantity upto 3 lakh tonnes of rice in the open market in some of the important cities in the country. The export of non-basmati rice has been restricted to 7 lakh tonnes as against the original decision of the Government to export 10 lakh tonnes during the current year.

Wheat: Inspite of less procurement of wheat during the current year as compared to last year, the allocation of wheat from the central pool to various States/UTs for the public distribution system during April-November, 1991 is of the order of 7.02 million tonnes as compared to 5.9 million tonnes during the corresponding period of last year. The Government has decided to sell upto 3 lakh tonnes of wheat in the open market to stabilise the price line. It has been decided to restrict the export of wheat to a total of 8 lakh tonnes during the current year as against 10 lakh tonnes decided earlier.

Pulses: Steps are being taken from time to time to increase the production of pulses. Their availability is being augmented through import. Pulses are imported under Open General Licence.

Edible Oils: It has been decided to import 1.5 lakh tonnes of Palmolein to improve the domestic availability of edible oils and to meet the growing need from States for the Public Distribution System (PDS).

Sugar, Gur and Khandsari: The prices of these commodities are already at reasonable levels.

Other Items: The increase in prices of other items may be attributed to general shortfall in production, increased demand, increase in freight charges etc.

Shortage of edible oil

695. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any shortage of edible oil in the country:

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the amount of edible oil imported during the last three years and till date?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED): (a) and (b) Yes Madam, the gap between demand and availability of edible oils from indigenous sources is estimated at around 7 lakh MTs.

(c) The edible oils imported by STC during the last three financial years and till date are as under:—

Year	Quantity (lakh MT)
1988-89	10·89
1989-90	2·96
1990-91	5·38
1991-92 (Upto 18-11-1991)	0·30

Mobile Fair Price Shops

696. SHRI JAGADISH JANI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to operate mobile Fair Price Shops in the inaccessible areas of the country;

(b) if so, the states where such Fair Price Shops are being operated;

(c) whether any Fair Price Shop has been set up in the tribal areas in Orissa; and

(d) if so, the details of the areas where such shops are being operated in Orissa?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED): (a) and (b) Central Government have since 1985-86, been operating a Plan Scheme for providing Financial Assistance to States/UTs for purchasing vans to be operated as mobile Fair Price Shops in inaccessible areas etc. of the country. Assistance under this scheme has so far been availed of by 17 State Governments/UT Administrations *viz* Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Rajasthan, Orissa, Chandigarh, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.

(c) and (d). As many as 51 mobile Fair Price Shops are being operated by the Orissa State Civil Supplies Corporation in Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) areas of the State, covering 21 Project areas, located in 9 districts.

697. [*Transferred to the 6th December*, 1991]

The quality of food article supplied through Public Distribution System

698. SHRI S. K. T. RAMACHANDRAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state the steps taken by Government to improve the quality of food articles, supplied through Public Distribution System?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED): The steps taken to provide proper quality of food articles through the Public Distribution System (PDS) include:

Foodgrains: Food Corporation of India (FCI) issues to State Governments/their agencies, foodgrains confirming to PFA requirements. Facility is provided to the recipient agency to check thequality of foodgrains issued by FCI. Generally, sealed samples are drawn and one sample is given to the recipient authority for reference purpose.

Levy Sugar: The quality of levy sugar being supplied to the States/UTs for distribution under PDs is of ISS Grade. As and when a complaint regarding the quality of sugar is received, the same is looked into for remedial action.